



The South India CHURCHMAN

The Magazine of the Church of South India

• NOVEMBER 1983
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FOCUS ON
EVANGELISM



CONTENTS

	Page
Top Priority for Evangelism	1
Evangelism and Outreach in the Church of South India	3
Evangelistic Task of the Church in India today	6
Partnership in Mission in the 1980's	12
An Evangelical Balance Sheet from Vancouver	15
World Council of Churches General Secretary's Report	17
News from the Dioceses	20
News from all over	21
Book Review	22

Opinions expressed by contributors do not commit the C.S.I.

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NOVEMBER 1983

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25 Years Ago

Witness is the essential mission and responsibility of every Christian and of every church. All disciples stand under the Great Commission of the One Lord.

The purpose of witness is to persuade people to accept the Supreme authority of Christ, to commit themselves to Him and to render Him long service in the fellowship of His Church. The witness of Christians to Jesus Christ requires personal testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus. It can reflect the truth in its fullness. Even when inwardly compelled to testify against that which appears erroneous in some other religious belief or practice, the true witness cannot but be humble and honest. Such witness seeks a response which contributes to the upbuilding of fellowship of those who acknowledge the Lordship of Christ.

— Churchman 1

(Cover Design : Courtesy — Amsterdam '83)

Top Priority for Evangelism



When the Church of South India was led to set up its priorities for the mission of the Church, evangelism was given a top priority by almost all the dioceses. The report of the Synod Board of Missions and Evangelism which was presented by the Bishop Daniel Abraham at the 10th Session of the Synod (Vellore) gave a clear picture of the work done in some dioceses, which is quite encouraging. 'In spite of various difficulties and problems arising in this country against this great task, the Church is moving ahead fast to fulfil its call and command of its Lord and Master'. In fact, the Church is under bound to carry on this as it has pledged to do so. A relevant passage from the Constitution will enable us to understand its position.

'to be mindful of its Missionary calling and pray that it may not only be greatly used of God in the Evangelism of South India, but it may also take its due share in the preaching of the gospel and the building up of Christ's Church in other parts of the world' (Ch. II, para 3). The Synod Executive Committee which met at Dharwad recently has decided to set up a secretariate for Evangelism at the Synod level and a full-time director be appointed to coordinate the work in the dioceses and other

missionary associations and to systematically plan the evangelistic and missionary activities of the Church. This, certainly, is a step forward in accomplishing its goal. Two articles written by Bishop Daniel Abraham and Rev. Azariah deal with the subject at length, discussing all the issues involved in carrying on the Evangelistic work.

However, an objective glance at our society reveals approximately three different patterns of living, dividing people into three different distinct social strata, namely, the urban, rural and the tribal communities. There is a clear distinction between the urban and rural communities while tribal community has altogether a separate and distinct identity. For social, cultural and economic reasons, the rural as well as the tribal communities have failed to keep pace with the progress in the urban counterpart. On account of ignorance and social inertia they were pushed to a State of perpetual backwardness.

In contrast to the ethos of Western Culture, we find that in the Indian village culture the elements which helped mobilise the process of secularisation in the Western Societies altogether are missing. Like the Renaissance and the

Protestant movements, there had hardly been any social, religious or political movements which could have eliminated the social barriers like caste system, social traditions and religious rigidities. Church has to take these factors into consideration and work out a suitable strategy.

The Church has been trying to bridge this big gap with its limited resources and limited trained personnel. In a country of India's size and population, diversity of religions, languages, regional imbalances and several other factors, it is not easy to evolve any single policy or a generally acceptable strategy. Nevertheless, Church will do better if it employs the Indian art forms to communicate the Gospel, and at the same time muster the strength of the local gifted

artistes like ballad singers, folk dancers etc. Evangelism should be a people's movement. But it is rather sad to note that many think that the Bible has very little to say about the arts. They do not seem to understand that the arts too are supposed to be under the Leadership of Christ. The art has a place in the Christian life—it is not peripheral. We can use these arts to the glorification of God. An art work can be doxology in itself. Whatever may be the feelings of some of our people, Church need to make concerted efforts to reach the vulnerable sections of communities and also people living in remote and farflung tribal areas with the Gospel, before we lose time and opportunity.

DASS BABU.

CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

I. Poster Contest

The Communications Department of Church of South India invites artists who belong to the Church of South India to submit posters that express the theme:

IN THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

This is the theme of the Synod to be held at Hyderabad in 1984.

A first prize of Rs. 100 and two subsequent prizes of Rs. 50 each will be awarded. Posters will be displayed at the Synod meetings. The Synod will retain sole rights for the publication of posters.

TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

- i. Each poster must carry the words, 'IN THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.'
- ii. Posters can be in full colour, limited colour, or black and white.
- iii. The size of the posters should be 42 cm × 62 cm (17" × 24.5")
- iv. The posters should accompany the letters of authentication from the respective Bishops.
- v. Designs should be received at the following address before 30th December 1983.

II. Lyric Writing Competition

Lyrics (with 3 or 4 stanzas on the theme, 'IN THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE HOLY SPIRIT' are invited from the members of the Church of South India. Lyrics may be in any one of the four languages viz. Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam.

A first prize of Rs. 50 for the best lyrics from each language will be awarded.

The lyrics will be set on to the tunes and if possible will be sung in the Synod Conference to be held in 1984. The Synod will retain the sole rights of the lyrics for publication, Cassette tapes, disc recording, etc.

The artists and lyric writers should attach letter of authentication from the respective Bishops and mail them so as to reach on or before 30th December 1983, to the address:

REV. DASS BABU

Director, Communications Dept.,

Synod Secretariat, P.B. No. 4906,

Cathedral Compound, Madras-600 086.

EVANGELISM AND OUTREACH IN THE CHURCH OF SOUTH INDIA

RT. REV. S. DANIEL ABRAHAM

Bishop in Tirunelveli

‘Full authority in heaven and on earth has been committed to me. Go forth therefore and make all nations my disciples ; baptise men everywhere in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all that I have commanded you. And be assured, I am with you always, to the end of time.’—St. Matt. 28 : 18-20.

‘Go forth to every part of the world and proclaim the Good News to the whole nation.’—St. Mk. 16 : 14.



This is the great and clear command given to the Church by the Risen Lord and this is of such importance that it is recorded in the Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles. ‘Evangelism is the foremost task of the Church ; next to Worship, and there has never been a time in the history of the world when the need to take this task seriously has been so imperative.

The International Congress on World Evangelisation in Lausanne has explained the terms as follows : ‘To evangelize is to spread the Good News that Jesus Christ died for our sins and was raised from the dead according to the Scriptures, and that as the reigning Lord He now offers the forgiveness of sins and the liberating gift of the Spirit to all who repent and believe. Our Christian presence in the World is indispensable to evangelism, and so is that kind of dialogue whose purpose is to listen sensitively in order to understand. But evangelism itself the proclamation of the historical, Biblical Christ as Saviour and Lord, with a view to persuading people to come to Him personally and so be reconciled to God. In issuing the Gospel invitation we have no liberty to conceal the cost of discipleship. Jesus still calls all who would follow him to deny themselves, take up their cross, and identify themselves with his new community. The results of evangelism include obedience to Christ, incorporation into His Church and responsible service in the world.’

The word ‘evangelism’ is derived from the Greek word which is used in the New Testament to denote the spoken announcement of the Gospel and therefore the word evangelism is restricted in meaning to announcing the message of salvation. It is therefore understood that to evangelize means to announce or proclaim or bring the Good News of salvation to man. But as one goes through the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles and studies this life and work of Christ and also of the Church, one will find that the word is frequently used in a richer context. Jesus introduces His ministry with the prophetical words of Isaiah, ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach Good News, to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind to set at liberty those who are oppressed to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.’ Here the proclamation of the Good News, is linked directly with the demonstration of the Good News. Jesus came into the world not just to preach, but to show the reality of the living God in a way that

powerfully met the personal needs of the people. Therefore, the word ‘to evangelize’ means much more than to announce the Good News. It is preaching as well as doing. These two cannot be separated. Through the parable Jesus preached the Good News and at the same time demonstrated it by His miracles which were not just signs and wonders, but examples of the love and care and compassion of the One Who had come to bring the Good News. St. Luke says that he had dealt with in his first volume all that Jesus began to do and to teach. So also in the Acts of the Apostles, which contains the history of the newborn Church, we see every proclamation of the Gospel was accompanied by a demonstration of the same by which the needs of man were also met. Therefore, the Church following faithfully its Lord and Master has pledged itself to meet the total need of man with the total love of God which was manifested in His Life and ministry. That is how preaching the Word and social service are linked together in the Church. They go hand-in-hand and can never be separated.

Secondly, the word ‘to evangelize’ is used for those inside the Kingdom as well as for those outside. St. Paul writes in Romans (1:15), ‘I am eager to preach the Gospel to you also who are in Rome.’ He was never contented with his work in a limited area. He wanted to reach out to people who were scattered far and wide, not only Jews but the gentiles, also, not only in and around Judaea, Samaria and Macedonia, but in Rome also. Jesus immediately after His resurrection sent word to His disciples to go to Galilee and He went there before them. He commanded them to go to every part of the world. When they failed to obey Him and were concentrating in and around Jerusalem, stones fell on Stephen, the Church was disturbed and persecuted and the disciples were scattered all over the country and those who had been scattered went through the country preaching the Gospel. The followers of Christ have to reach out to the people with the Word of God and loving deeds.

Every Christian who is a true disciple of Christ and the Church which is the body of Christ should obey the command of their Lord and Master and should faithfully follow His footsteps in this field of evangelism and outreach.

The Church is the divinely appointed means and agent for spreading the Gospel. The purpose of its existence

is to live and preach the Good News to all people. The early Church was a group of people filled by the love of Christ and thus became a fellowship of believers (Koinonia). The result of this over-flowing love of Christ was evangelism and thereby evangelism becomes the normal programme of the Church and is a proof of its healthy life. The Churches shall never be just mission churches, they are missionary churches. In the first century, there was only one missionary society and it was the Church itself. The Church of South India is more a missionary body than a church, it is known the world over as a Movement.

Evangelism and Outreach in the Church of South India

The Church of South India was formed in obedience to the Will of God 'that they all may be one' and has pledged itself to live also in obedience to the great command of the Lord 'Go and Preach'. In the Tranquebar manifesto there is an important statement which reads, 'We face together the titanic task of the winning of India for Christ'. Bishop Azariah, the Convener of the Tranquebar Conference, was primarily an evangelist. Even after becoming the first Indian Bishop of the former Anglican Church, the fire for reaching the unreached was glowing in his heart. The Tranquebar Conference was the outcome of this compassion and this Conference laid the foundation for the formation of the Church of South India. The Church of South India is a movement for a definite cause in India and outside. The cause is evangelism and outreach. The United Churches in the Church of South India are themselves the fruits of the evangelistic work and outreach programmes of the churches in other parts of the world. So, the Church of South India has pledged itself to continue the same work with the same zeal and dedication. Bearing this in mind, the architects of the Constitution of the Church of South India have brought out at every stage in the Constitution the importance of evangelism and outreach. It will be very appropriate to quote some of them here so that we can be reminded of them.

In the governing principles of the Church under the heading, 'the Evangelistic Calling of the Church' it is said, 'The Church of South India thankfully acknowledges that the Churches which have been united to form it owed their existence mainly to the faith, zeal and prayers of many who either came themselves from other lands to India in order to preach the Gospel and build up the Church of Christ or gave liberally of their time and money for the furtherance of that work. It believes that the Holy Spirit has guided those churches into this union in order that this same work of evangelization may be the more effectively fulfilled, in accordance with the prayer which Christ prayed that by the unity of His disciples the world might know that He had been sent to be its Saviour. Therefore, the Church of South India purposes ever to be mindful of its missionary calling; and prays that it may not only be greatly used of God for the evangelization of South India, but may also take its due share in the preaching of the Gospel and the building up of Christ's Church in other parts of the world.'

Under the Ministry of the Church the Preaching of the Gospel is stated as one of the vocations of the ordained ministry. It is said, 'To the whole Church and to every member of it belongs the duty and privilege of spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ.'

The Bishops of the Church are enjoined to the same task by the Church of South India Constitution wherein it is stated, 'It is the duty of the bishop to take the lead in the

evangelistic work of the diocese; and he should do all in his power to foster and promote it both by his own example and also by the encouragement which he gives to others, and therefore he should continually remind both ministers and people of their duty in this respect.' Likewise the presbyters are expected to use every opportunity to preach the Gospel to non-Christians and bring men to the obedience of the faith.

While defining the ministry of the laity in Chapter V the Constitution includes in it the proclaiming and witnessing to the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The laity are to contribute to the full-time service of the Church in the ministries, evangelism, education, healing and other forms of service.

It will be appropriate to have a glimpse of the evangelistic and outreach programme that is carried on in the dioceses. The local parishes often engage themselves in various programmes like the Week of Witness, Full-moon Preaching, Street Preaching and Distribution of Tracts. This is being done regularly with the participation of the congregation members.

Nine dioceses have their Gospel Bands which have regular programmes of preaching the Gospel within the Diocese. Some of the Dioceses have Home Missions. They have chosen certain areas within the dioceses and do intensive evangelistic and social work. Some dioceses have established mission fields outside the dioceses, some within the CSI and some outside. They also support missionary bodies by their prayers and by sending men and money.

The work of the National Missionary Society and the Indian Missionary Society are supported financially by many of the dioceses. The above two missionary societies have been officially recognised by the Synod Board of Missions and Evangelism. The Indian Missionary Society has the major support from the Tirunelveli Diocese and it has its branches in many of the dioceses of the CSI. It has its main field in the Dornakal Diocese. The Palia field in Anakara is being handed over to the Madhy-Kerala Diocese and the field in Koilnessammalpuram is also under the process of being handed over to the Madurai-Ramnad Diocese. In 1967 the Indian Missionary Society started its work in Malkangiri, Orissa, to reach the tribals. In 1967 another field in Madhya Pradesh was started in Sukma to reach the Kumara and Halbi tribal people. In 1979 the Indian Missionary Society started two fields—one in Indi, Bijapur District, North Karnataka and the other at Osmanabad, Maharashtra. In 1981 two more fields were inaugurated—one at Khedbrahma, North Gujarat, and the other at Sagwara in Durgapur District, Rajasthan. In all the Indian Missionary Society fields the missionaries are reaching the tribals. This year's annual budget for the Indian Missionary Society is more than Rs. 5,50,000. It has three basic principles as Indian finance, Indian personnel and Indian fields. The Society maintains these principles from its formation in 1903.

Other Missionary Societies

Since 1967, other missionary societies also have been formed within the Church of South India area. The most important of them are the Friends Missionary Prayer Band and the Indian Evangelical Mission. The FMPB is mostly supported by the members of the CSI churches. The missionaries and the office-bearers of the society are mostly members of the Church of South India. The IEM is an interdenominational organisation which has its

headquarters at Bangalore. There are other societies like Church Growth Missionary Movement and Church Growth Missions. FYGMA is another missionary society which has charismatic emphasis. The Church of South India is watching the progress of the new missionary societies, but has not formulated any definite principle regarding these societies.

Synod Board of Missions and Evangelism

The functions of the Synod Board of Missions and evangelism is to coordinate the work carried on by the dioceses. It has also been entrusted with the responsibility to arrange for the missionary work of the Church of South India outside the CSI area in India and also in other countries.

The Church of South India took charge of the Papua Mission in New Guinea which was under the care of the South India United Church. This was then handed over to the local Church. Then, the Thailand Mission was started. But this mission was closed as the Church of South India was not able to send money to Thailand due to restrictions imposed by the Government of India.

Nirmal Mission was handed over to the Church of South India Board of Missions and Evangelism by the South India United Church. Recently, the Nirmal Mission area was handed over to the local diocese. In 1979, it was decided to shift the mission to Bhainsa and it is called as the Bhainsa Mission Field. A missionary couple supported by the Madurai-Ramnad Diocese and another couple supported by the South Kerala Diocese are working in the Bhainsa Field.

The reports of the Synod Board of Missions given in the Synod meetings are very interesting, but there is no time and space to bring them in here in detail.

The Great Challenge

In India every seventh person is a tribal. There are 427 tribal groups in Central and North India. Most of them are illiterates. The literacy rate is commonly as low as 5% in tribal languages have no scripts.

The tribals are not Hindus. They do not come under the four traditional caste divisions of Hindu religion. Some anthropologists and sociologists call them 'Traditional Religionists of India'. Mostly they are animists who have faith in one God who is 'Spirit'. By nature they are very simple and are eager to have fellowship with others. Mostly the tribals in Central India are illiterates and very backward. In some parts they are rich farmers having lands and cattle.

There is a great awakening among the tribals in recent years. The Government tries its best to improve them with various schemes projects. As a result, roads have been constructed in the interior regions. So, the missionaries can be sent to the interior regions and the villages. In recent years tribals are quite open to the Gospel and the missionary societies are experiencing good response from the tribal groups.

Christianity has had a great influence among the tribal people of India. Certain tribes have been greatly influenced since the 19th century; the Khasis of Meghalaya

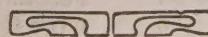
and different groups in Nagaland from 1813, the Oraons of Chotanagpur in 1850, the Bails and Gonds in Madhya Pradesh in 1880 and the Mizos of Mizoram in 1899. According to available figures, 5.5% of the tribal people of India (about 2 million) are Christians, half of them live in the Northeast Frontier region. The other half reside mostly in Bihar and in pockets of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. All the Nicobaris of Nicobar Islands are Christians.

In the Church of South India area, North Karnataka area and North Andhra Pradesh have more tribals. The Dornakal Diocese has more than one lakh of Lambadies. Recently there is a great move among the Lambadies and a people movement is in progress. There is a good response among the Bails and Gonds in South Gujarat.

At the same time opposition to the preaching of the Gospel and for the social service of the Church is growing and in some places it has taken a virulent form. The Rashtriya Sevak Singh, Arya Samaj and some other Hindu organisations are deadly opposite to this programme of the Church. The Church of South India has a responsibility to see the religious freedom guaranteed in the Constitution of the Nation is taken care of by the rulers of the country. It should therefore insist that the secular form of government shall be maintained so that all people in the country can grow together. And at the same time, the Church has to examine itself whether every member of the Church is a practising Christian and a witness to the saving power of the Lord in word and in deed and also to rethink its mode of approach in this great task.

The following suggestions are made :—

1. To teach every member of the Church of South India his responsibility and involvement in evangelism.
2. To train them for evangelistic and social work.
3. To revive suitably the Junior Missionary Association to introduce the spirit of evangelism in the younger generation.
4. To found a Missionary Institute to train workers for practical evangelism.
5. To encourage the congregations to give liberally to Church sponsored missionary societies.
6. To make efforts to co-ordinate the work of various missionary bodies in the Church of South India area.
7. To create a C.S.I. Synod Fund for Evangelism and outreach to support the missionary activities of the Dioceses.
8. To observe a full week as Week of Witness throughout the Church of South India and also a Day of Gospel Festival to express the fullest participation of the entire Church in evangelism and outreach.
9. To observe one Sunday in a year as Missionary Sunday in which special prayers should be offered for evangelistic and outreach work in the Church of South India and take collections for the Missionary work in the Church of South India.
10. To meet these needs a directorate at the Synod level be created with one or two full-time directors keeping in constant touch with the diocesan directors and encourage the work in all the dioceses in the Church of South India.



Evangelistic Task of the Church in India today

THE REV. M. AZARIAH, *Madras*

1. Introduction

Although the Good News of Jesus Christ reached the Indian shores some 1930 years ago, according to the 1981 census, out of a total population of some 683 million Indian citizens, only about 20 millions are Christians. This would come to just around 3%. Even so, Christians would still be a microscopic minority in the midst of an extremely pluralistic society. While accepting this challenge of pluralism, the Indian Church must first shed any minority complex before it can authentically and relevantly engage in its Mission.

2. The Indian Church scene today

For over 1,500 years the Christians of St. Thomas managed to confine themselves to the South West Coastal strip of our land not growing beyond one lakh (100,000). It was by the end of 15th Century with the coming of Vasco da Gama in 1495 the Roman Catholic Christianity was introduced and with Francis Xavier's arrival in the 16th Century the process of Evangelisation began. But only at the close of the 17th Century when Ziganbalg and his companions landed at Tranquebar, the western protestant Christianity with its German Evangelical pietism came to South India. And only by the close of the 18th Century, William Carey and his companions brought to Calcutta in the North East India the Evangelical Christianity of Baptist fervour. Thus started the modern Missionary movement beginning from Tranquebar in the South, and Calcutta in the North. Then followed further waves of missionary advances by organized Evangelising missions from Britain like the SPG, and CMS (both Anglican) and later on the Baptists, the LMS, and the MMS. From the Western Europe came the German Lutheran Missions, the Basel Mission, the Swedish Lutheran Mission, etc. From the North America came the Canadian Baptists, the American Baptists and the American Episcopal Methodists who all followed the earlier American Missions of the Reformed Presbyterian and Lutheran Traditions. These different, often doctrinally exclusive Missionary Societies chose their own areas of operation and tended to transplant their respective brand of Christian faith and practice and establish their separate daughter-churches in the various parts of India. We cannot say that they strictly observed any understanding of Comity of Missions since they often overlapped in establishing their different congregations in the same Districts and even in the same town. And it was in that context these above-mentioned denominations came to see, however dimly and slowly, the sin of division in the Church which they admitted and confessed at the first International Missionary Conference at Edinburgh in 1910 and resolved to make amends. This is how the Missionary Movement opened itself into the Ecumenical Movement. It is their daughter-churches that are described generally as the main line Mission Churches which have become members of the NCCI. Thus there are some 23 Churches in the Council today. From among the non-conformist or patently heretical groups like Jehovah's witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, the Christian Scientists, the Latter Day Saints, the Quaker Friends, and the Salvation

Army, only the last mentioned are members of the NCCI. The other denominational and Sectarian Missionary bodies that had entered India and seem to be flourishing in their varieties all over the country today have come only in the decades following 1910 Edinburgh Conference. Most of these organizations claimed to be either pentecostals or conservatives or fundamentalists or Evangelicals in their background in the countries of their origin. Most of these came from the United States of America or Canada some from England and from Western Europe as also from Australia and New Zealand.

The Specifically Evangelical congregations and Churches that were formed during this century particularly after 1947 Independence are the ones now associated with the 30 years old Evangelical Fellowship of India and the recently formed Federation of Evangelical Churches in India. Under this category we can mention the 25 year old Evangelical Church of India formerly O.M.S., the 30 years old Brethren Assemblies and others. Of course there are the more strict conservative fundamentalist groups like the Church of Christ American Advent Mission etc. Then there are the Pentecostals like the Ceylon Pentecostal Mission, Church of God in India and other sub-sections (e.g. Maranatha), that do not belong to any of the above categories. Then we have the different branches of the Orthodox Church in Kerala like the Syrian Orthodox Church, the Mar Thoma Church, the Nestorian Chaldean Church of the East who are all under the umbrella of NCCI. Besides these above-mentioned Protestant and Orthodox Churches we have the Roman Catholic Church who claim to have a total strength of 12 million members in its fold in India. Thus we see a clear but dismal picture of the 'Scandal of disunity' not only in organization but even of purpose. I am saying all this only to point out to the fragmentary and often competitive nature of the Christian enterprise in India today. Now, when we set this kind of picture of the Indian Church in the midst of the complex context of the country as a whole, we may begin to see the nature as well as the content of the Evangelistic task for the Indian Church in the Eighties.

3. Our National Context today

The Social, political, Economic and cultural as well as Religious situation in India today is substantially and even radically different from that obtaining in the 17th, 18th and 19th Centuries and indeed different from that in the first part of this 20th Century before Independence. The Constitution of the Republic of India operative from 1950 has provided for freedom for every citizen to 'profess, practice and propagate' the faith of his or her choice. And yet many limitations, restrictions as well as opportunities that surround this religious freedom are revealed by the factors in our national context.

(a) *Social Factors* : The conglomeration of races like the Dravidian, Aryan, Mangoloid, Polynesian, Parsi, Persian, etc., the pluiform caste-groupings that number more than 2000 according to 1901 census, the multilingual separations by over 200 languages and dialects in the

country, all these divisions are further complicated by the cores of religions that divide our people into well-defined communal sections and groups. The caste factor is the single dominant force that undermines social justice in our society today.

Organised efforts towards national integration both by voluntary and Government agencies notwithstanding, these divisions and sub-divisions go on multiplying. Further the political parties both at the national and State levels contribute not a little to the ongoing fragmentation and splintering of the Indian society. Now, what form should the Evangelistic task of the Church in India take in such a social context? Perhaps we can agree on the obvious hint that it should be clearly in the form of Ministry of reconciliation (II Cor. 5 : 17 f).

(b) *Political situation* : The Indian Constitution envisages a Secular Socialist and democratic form of Government. This encourages party system and we have scores of these political parties incensed by frequent elections which have however, helped to awaken the political consciousness of our generation even among the 80% rural population. The sense of freedom and the awareness of people's rights and privileges have gone straight into their heads while the sense of responsibilities and discipline is not equally appreciated as evidenced by frequent protest-marches, strikes, cases of corruption in all levels of Government and student-unrest all over the country. Now, in such a situation what should be the Evangelistic response of the Church today? Can the Gospel ethics transform our political life (Matt. 5-8).

(c) *Economic conditions* : While the frequent famines and food shortage that characterised the colonial times seem to be overcome, the natural calamities of floods and drought continue to expose our technological backwardness. In spite of rapid industrial growth, increasing modernisation of agricultural efforts and steady increase in the GNP the lack of political will for distributive justice seems to have widened the gap between the rich and the poor. Almost 30% of the population are known to be living below the poverty line. Poverty is the key problem and what kind of evangelism is called for towards solving this problem? Surely, the Gospel needs to be preached to the poor (Mark. 4 : 18 f).

(d) *Cultural situation* : Our ancient culture with its 'organ' from the unreal, lead me to the real' etc., does not seem to have changed much over all these three or four thousand years. The vast majority of our people continue to be doomed to the same reality of life and resigned themselves to Fate and Karma of their destiny. The vast majority, that is, more than 65% still continue to be illiterate and unmindful of the possibilities of education even for their children. The major Indian religions through a system of socio-personal and divine relationships, have domesticated and subdued the people into a culture of docility. In such a situation what kind of Evangelism could help bring about the most urgently needed cultural transformation of our masses? The answer seems to point to an adult education that creates an awareness of the reality of living and pointing to the prospects of liberation (Romans. 12 : 1 f).

(e) *Religious situation* : About 85% of the people are Hindus and 8% are Muslims which is the largest Muslim group anywhere in the world. The Christians form 3% of the population as the third largest community with about 10 million adherents, followed by Sikhs, Buddhists and others. Indian Muslims seem to seek security in International Pan-Islamic Associations. There are conscious efforts at revival and resurgence in all these religions, parti-

cularly in the colourful and often contradictory world of Hinduism. In fact the numerous sects and even reform movements like the Arya Samaj, Ananda Marga, Chinmaya Movement, the Ramakrishna Movement, the Sai Baba cult, the Transcendental Meditation movements as well as the R.S.S. have at least one common characteristic of what I would call 'an intolerable tolerance', towards other religions in this country which they ever seek to assimilate and absorb. While the observances and celebrations of the frequent religious ceremonies, pilgrimages, festivals, holidays etc. by every religious grouping seem to go on unabated, we cannot say that the ancient fears and superstitions that surround most of Indian religiosity have been removed or even weakening. No. The recent total eclipse of the sun was for example the nationally demonstrated occasion of the hold of superstition on the people of this land including Christians. Perhaps I may be permitted to hazard a guess that underneath all our showy mantle of Indian spirituality there is really an 'arrogant and self-righteous hypocrisy' that eats away at the moral fibre resulting in a massive corruption and indiscipline and injustice in our nation. In such a situation what again ought to be our Evangelistic task?

4. The Response of the Indian Church

It could be noticed that there is a tacit assumption in traditional evangelism that the Christian faith stands apart from other religions in our country. But it must be confessed that Indian Christianity as it obtains today both in its faith and practice stands also under the same judgement as other faiths. This calls for an urgent need to rethink not only the methods and strategies and styles of functioning of the various branches of the Indian Church and their Evangelistic operations, but also the form and shape into which the content of the Christian faith is brought to bear upon the life of our great nation and its teeming millions. This effort to make the religion of Christ relevant to the people of our land must involve, I am convinced, a process of *indigenization or inculcation, contextualisation, the ministry of reconciliation and identification*.

(i) *Indigenization* : This is a subject more and more debated and less and less implemented and in fact unthinkingly resisted by the rank and file of the Indian Church. Since the days of Robert de Nobili, laudable attempts have been made to bring the message as well as the person of the Master into the locally understandable and acceptable forms of language and thought forms, concepts and ideas, of worship, song, etc. The Roman Catholic Church promotes this process through its centres like the National, Biblical, Liturgical and Catechetical Centre in Bangalore, Aikyalayam Dialogue centre at Madras and other similar efforts at the Papal Seminary in Poona and elsewhere. The Protestant Seminaries at Bangalore, Madurai and elsewhere are also making their own contributions in this regard. The Mukthi Mission of Panditha Ramabai Foundation near Poona, the Ashram movement in centres like Thirupatthoore and Sat Tal Ashram at the foot of the Himalayas, through their 'Sat Sangh' meetings also contribute to this process. The great study centres like the Social Institute in Delhi, the C.I.S.R.S. and the Centre for Social Action in Bangalore, the Sankha Studies Centre at Batala, the Henry Martin Institute of Islamic studies at Hyderabad, etc., continue to produce a lot of materials both for study and implementation in this regard. The theological contributions insisting on inculcation of Indian Christian thinkers of yester years like Chenchiah, Chakkrai, Appasamy, Tilak, Nehemiah Goreh, Krishnapillai and others need to be popularised and absorbed into the thinking and witness of the ordinary Indian Christians. The book

called 'Gospel and Culture' by Rev. Fr. Amalorpavadooss and another by Bishop Sunder Clarke, 'Let the Indian Church be Indian' make great contributions in this field.

Of course there is a big opposition and even condemnation of these efforts by conservative Evangelical elements in the Indian Church. But there is a need to patiently convince them all as to its relevance and urgency for a fruitful Evangelistic task in the present context in India.

(ii) *Contextualization* : The concern for the context is built into the very first proclamation of Jesus himself when he declared, 'Repent and believe in the Gospel, the Kingdom of God is at Hand'. It was in the 'fulness of time' the Word of God became flesh (John 1:14) and dwelt amongst us. It was the time when people were crowding to hear the call of John the Baptist, to repent and to receive forgiveness of their sins. And it was the time when the one with authority to forgive men, and also to Baptise them with not merely water but with Spirit of God had appeared along with those crowds. Jesus Christ their Saviour joined alongside of them to be Baptised even like them so that he can bring His Mission in context to the people. Are we not also in the Church as the body of Christ to bring the mission of Christ (as described in the Nazareth Manifesto in Luke 4: 18-21) related to the actual life-situations and contexts of the people?

Further we know that Jesus was not at all oblivious to the socio-political milieu and the economic context of his times. On the other hand, He fully and clearly understood the Socio-political dynamics that oppressed and suppressed the poor people and He deliberately took the side of masses of the people and preached 'Good News to the Poor' (Luke 4: 18). So He was branded the friend of the 'Publicans and sinners' (Matt. 8) like Zachaeus and Mary Magdalene, the lepers and the shepherds, the fishermen and other rural poor in Galilee. The Power politics of His times in Palestine under the colonial yoke of the Roman Empire have thrown up several Religio-Political parties. Thus there were the Sadducees, the Herodians, the Pharisees, the Zealots, (Simon the Zealot was a member), the Sicarii (Judas Iscariot seems to have been a member of this violently revolutionary party) and the Essenes, who were a desert dwelling religious order. These were conflicting rival parties prevalent in the time of Jesus. He had of course definite views and estimate about them and had rejected each of them as being anti-people. On His part, He set Himself for the mission of liberation of the people. This was the central content of His 'Gospel of the Kingdom of God'. The nature and content of this 'Reign of God', that He had come to usher in and establish upon this earth (Luke 11: 1-4) are precisely what we have described for us, in the sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-8), in the Nazareth Sermon (Luke 4: 18-21), in the passage on the criteria for final judgement (Matt. 25: 35-45), and in most of His Parables as well as Miracles. St. Peter also recognised such to be the Mission of Jesus when he summarized the redemptive work of Jesus to the Gentile congregation with Cornelius in the 10th chapter of Acts (VV: 37-41) saying Jesus 'Went About Doing Good'. That is how Peter described the Evangelistic (Good News Proclamation) task of Jesus Christ.

Further, contextualization means that we define and discharge the duties of our Evangelistic task in direct proportion and equation to the contextual situations in which the people we seek to evangelise are living in. And this means, against the foregoing description of the Indian context, we boldly engage in tasks of social and cultural and economic transformation as well as the spiritual regeneration of all our peoples, especially 'the poor of the

land'. Such alone can be the holistic view of the whole Gospel to the whole man in the whole world.

We rejoice to learn that increasing agreement as to the goal of our Evangelistic Mission is being reached today Among the different wings of the Indian Church. While both the Roman Catholic and liberal Protestant main-line churches had long accepted social concern and action as part of the mission and went about fulfilling it right from the start through their numerous educational and health service institutions, and even established several economic development organizations and agencies, it was only recently, particularly after the 1974 Lausanne conference the Evangelical wing of the Indian Church and denominations accepted Social action as equally valid part of the Gospel with Evangelistic proclamation. Quite significantly the E.F.I. related Churches and Organisations in India have made a 'giant step forward' by their MADRAS DECLARATION in 1979, affirming the urgency and the inevitability of Social action as part of their Evangelistic task in this country. Indeed even among the conservative fundamentalists like the Pentecostals, the winds of change could be seen. We can surely hope that even the other sectarian and denominational Churches would soon come round to seeing the dimensions of the Evangelistic task of the whole Gospel for India today.

Being contextual, as noted above, means also proclaiming the Gospel in relevant and understandable language thought forms, concepts etc. with genuine understanding and acknowledgement of the milieu, or to use a metaphor in full assessment of the Soil on which the Seed (of the Gospel) is being sown. Precisely such was the concern of John's Gospel using concepts like, the logos (the word) and of the letter to the Hebrews (Ch. 1: 1 f) in the New Testament. This approach is in fact the forerunner of what is the recently developed approach of 'Dialogue' with the people of other faiths and Ideologies.

(iii) *Ministry of Reconciliation* : Some one said that our world today had narrowed into a neighbourhood, before it had broadened into a brotherhood. The incredible fastness with which science and technology had advanced, the supersonic speed with which the modern means of communications and transportation had developed, the fantastic feats of space explorations, the unbelievable achievements of computer technology that threaten to replace man by robots and cybernetics, all these and more within the span of this generation, simultaneously with the stock-piling of Nuclear weapons with the building of intercontinental ballistic missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads in minutes to the different corners of this earth, and indeed into all directions of outer space to ignite possible star wars have resulted in man becoming afraid of himself in this age of fear. Man fears man and nation fears nation. Hence the consequent threats, crises, conflicts, cold-war and open wars amongst and between nations, races, and communities between the blocks of first, the second and the third worlds so called.

Thus both outside as well as within this country, the forces that militate constantly against peace and harmony against fellow feelings and neighbourliness are ever present and active. Thus, we have in India today the unpredictable relations with China, Pakistan and Bangladesh and even Sri Lanka. Then there is the crisis in Assam that threatens to render millions of people into refugees. There are the frequent communal clashes with killings and wanton destruction of properties like the one in Kanyakumari District in March-April 1982, between Hindu RSS groups and Christian fishermenfolk or as in Kerala during January '83 between Hindu RSS groups and the Muslims. Then you have the frequent, widespread and increasing

number of atrocities perpetrated by the caste-groups against the outcastes or the so called 'Harijans', against this historically oppressed sections in this country. In such a situation, what else but a ministry of reconciliation could be the way of our Evangelistic Mission?

Some 30 years ago a book in Tamil was written by Bishop Newbiggin, called 'Sin and Salvation'. Then Bishop in Madurai, he wrote this Book to help his fellow ministers, evangelists and catechists in South India to understand the meaning of 'Sin and Salvation' according to the Christian faith. There it is made clear that Sin is in fact the fourfold alienation or separation between man and himself, between man and God, between man and brother man (Society) and between man and nature. And *Salvation*, would therefore, mean overcoming of these fourfold alienation or separation that characterise the life and experience of every man. But this can be achieved only through the ministry of *reconciliation* in the name and in the same way as Jesus Christ did, since 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself' (II Cor. 5 : 19).

This is what St. Paul had envisaged to be the task of all the disciples of Christ. Whoever 'is in Christ' and thus 'a new creature' (New being) has to be a minister of reconciliation (II Cor. 5 : 18-21), following the example of the Master who had broken down the middle wall of partition between the Jew and the Gentile, between male and female (Ephesians 2 : 14-18) and through his death on the cross God the Creator had made peace and brought back everything to himself (Colossians 1 : 15-23). But mark you well my friends, the beaten path of this ministry of reconciliation, is the path of calvary, the way of the cross, nothing less than that.

It is true that Christians, in this land are a tiny minority with mostly poor, ordinary people in all about 20 millions in the midst of 700 millions. But in Palestine some 2000 years our Lord from a village carpenter's home was practically a oneman minority but who had been anointed by the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 4 : 18f). He had commissioned his disciples, saying, 'As the father sent me, So I send you,' and 'Receive the Holy Spirit' (John 19 : 21,22), and yet with the clear warning, 'The World will make you suffer. But be brave! I have defeated the world!' (John 16 : 33 GNB). Precisely, to this 'little flock' in India this great task of reconciling ministry is entrusted. Shall we not accept the challenge and plunge into action? Will the Christian community in North-East India, who are the dominant majority in Mizoram and in Nagaland, and the substantial and significant minority of the population that is Christian in Meghalaya and in Manipur, though divided by their traditionally different some 28 tribal languages and loyalties and also by the denominational traditions as Baptists and Presbyterians and Catholics and Anglicans close their ranks thus uniting in the name of their common Lord so that these could join with other Christian brethren scattered in the hill states of Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh and also in Assam thus swelling their numbers to a formidable three million Christians to witness in the midst of about 20 million population? In today's context of the conflicts between the Hindus, the tribals and the Muslims complicated by the problem of 'foreign nationals' in Assam and in all the other 6 States of North East India, will the Christian Church accept the challenge with the help of the Holy Spirit to be a reconciling community and thus incarnate Christ in that part of our country?

Again, will the Christian community concentrated in the tribal-belt of *West Bengal*, *Bihar*, *Orissa* and *Madhya Pradesh* numbering a little over two millions, extend their united witness in the midst of opposition from their

Governments, even intimidation with anti-conversion laws as in *Orissa* and *Madhya Pradesh*? Will the predominant Roman Catholic community in and around the Union Territory of *Goa*, and in *Maharashtra* about 1½ millions plus the protestant concentration in *Gujarat* and *Punjab* together numbering about one and half a million Christians accept the challenge to be the instruments of reconciliation in their respective areas between oppressed sections of Dalits, neo-Buddhists etc. and the dominant oppressive majority communities? Will they dare to align with the working class in the Industries, mills and factories in the *Bombay* and *Gujarat* regions and thus bring about reconciliation with their monopolist-rich and powerful employers and business magnates?

Yet again, will the scattered Christian Community in the vast regions of the North Indian states of *Uttar Pradesh*, *Haryana*, *Himachal Pradesh*, *Punjab*, *Jammu* and *Kashmir*, with less than a million Christian people, yet continue to make their contribution in the field of education as pioneers and also as 'the conscience of the state', living as they do near the seat of power of the national Central Government in *Delhi*?

And finally, will the South Indian Christian Community having been in existence from the time of Apostle Thomas, since the middle of 1st Century AD, and as an influential minority in each of the 4 States of *Kerala* (6 millions) *Tamil Nadu* (3 millions), *Andhra Pradesh* (over 2 millions) and *Karnataka* (about one million) continue the pioneering service in the field of Education and Health care, and also in the area of Community Development? In South India in particular, the problems of caste-discriminations and social oppression predominated in past history. It is therefore, the special duty and responsibility, of the Church in South India to consciously take its stand on the side of the oppressed and discriminated sections of the population. The Church of South India had pioneered in Church unity attempting some 35 years ago to bring reconciliation and fellowship among the traditionally divided denominations of Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists and Congregationalists and among the 4 different linguistic sections of *Tamil*, *Malayalam*, *Telugu* and *Kannada* speaking populations. Can the CSI as well as the other denominational churches in South India, continue the process of mission of reconciliation, both between themselves as well as with the other sections of the population in this region that continue to be divided and often pitched against each other as communities that are splintered and fragmented by natural barriers like language and race, and man-made boundaries of caste and religious denominations and other sectorian considerations?

(iv) *Ministry of identification*: This aspect or mode of expression of our Evangelistic Mission in India must be derived from the incarnation of Christ (Philip 2 : 2-14). God in Christ, self-emptied himself (Gk-kenosis) to become human, nay more, a human slave condemned to total depravity of death on a cross, outside the city along with the criminals yet without any crime on his part. Thus our Lord had set a pattern of complete identification with the poor as the victimised, the most exploited and the deprived and divested of human dignity, with both sinned and sinned against human persons each made in the image of God the Creator. He did this to thus give back to every dehumanised and sub-humanised person his or her self-dignity and thus to restore him or her to the fullness of life (John 10 : 10, GK-Plerosis), into his or her full humanity (Eph. 4 : 18). Indeed, it is a process of 'Plerosis through Kenosis' as Bishop Chrisostom of the Mar Thoma Church would put it.

Thus, the ministry of identification at once implies that the Indian Church deliberately takes its stand on the side of the poorest of the poor in the land, with clear option for the marginalised, the exploited, the deprived, the down-trodden, the hungry, the oppressed, the sick and the suffering. The Church in India would in fact, encounter its Lord already present in such company as so clearly indicated in His parable of the Last Judgement (Matt. 25 : 35f.). Such 'least of the brethren' in this our mother-land are so many in their millions, every day encountered at the very doors of our houses and church buildings. And yet a considerable section of the Indian Church, would rather confine to the verbal proclamation of the good news, that is, to the ministry of admonition rather than to the ministry of identification. They would rather be concerned about preventing the rich Dives going to hell after his death, than be anxious about the poor Lazarus going through hell in his utter poverty, and denied of his God-given self-dignity, before his death. This they would simultaneously with the weekly singing of the Song of Mary (the magnificat) not meaning a whit of its implications for their living today. 'Henceforth they will call me blessed', said Mary, the rustic rural girl from Galilee, thus assured of her new found self-dignity 'Blessed are the poor' said the Lord on the Mount, offering restoration of self-dignity for all the poor. Will the Church in India, preach 'the Good news to the poor' (Luke 4 : 18), with its central message 'Blessed are you who are poor; for you shall inherit the Kingdom of God' thus assuring of 'self-dignity' to each of over 50% Indian citizens living below poverty line? Will the church make its options clear by further narrowing down on those not only economically poor but also culturally and even spiritually deprived and thus divested of their self-dignity? It needs no special wisdom to identify the so called 'Harijans', the untouchable outcastes as the real poor in spirit (Matt. 5 : 3), who are about 25% in India today. Of course, there are other sections of people to be added to this category. But having thus identified, will the Indian Church have the faithfulness and the tenacity to continue to seek ways and means of ensuring, the God given self-dignity and fullness of life for these 'least of the brethren, as we would do it unto the Lord Himself'? (Matt. 25 : 35-45.)

5. Conclusion

It is the firm conviction of this writer that while the present contexts and conditions in India demand the particular modes like *Indigenization*, *contextualization* and ministries of *reconciliation* and *identification* as urgent expressions of our Evangelistic task, none of these are to be exclusive in terms of only verbal proclamation of the Gospel or only Social action, but include both, in the same manner in which our Lord Himself went about preaching the good news of the Kingdom (Mark 1 : 15) and also 'doing good' (Acts 10 : 38). As Bishop Newbiggin had asserted, 'the preaching of the gospel and the service of Man's need are equally authentic and essential parts of the Church's responsibility but neither is a substitute for the other. No amount of service, however expert and however generous is a substitute for the explicit testimony to Jesus Christ . . . there is no equivalent to the Name of Jesus. But equally, the preaching of the Name will be empty if he who speaks it is not willing to deal honestly and realistically with the issues that his hearers have to face'. Dr. Emile Brunner had truly said: 'Before one can become an Evangelist he must first be a human being.' The clarian call to every Christian and Church in India today is first to be human and then enable others to become human. This is the spirit in which Dr. M. M. Thomas

interprets 'humanization as salvation' in his book under the same title, as being proper and relevant in our country today.

We do rejoice at the emergence in recent decades of some 24 indigenous missionary societies and movements in India particularly from the South, like Friends Missionary Prayer Band, Full Gospel Youngmen's Association, India Evangelical Mission (IEM) etc. Most of these claim to be interdenominational and independent associations comprising the Evangelically inclined sections mostly drawn from the main-line churches but not based within nor responsible to them like the well known National Missionary Society and the Indian Missionary Society are. It is reported that between them, these indigenous mission agencies have sent out over 500 cross-cultural missionaries mainly to the tribal belt regions in the Northern States of India with considerable success in establishing new congregations and churches. But unfortunately, they are all seemed to be influenced by the so-called 'Homogenous unit principle' (HUP) of the Church Growth Missiologists who theologically justify forming of Christian converts into exclusive community churches along their traditional sinful, man-made social groupings as tribes and sub-castes. In the context of Indian Society already so badly divided and in enmity with each other, should not the Christian mission be for reconciliation and harmonising the splintered society of ours? Should the dehumanized and traditionally oppressed sections of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes be condemned to stew in their own juice all in the name of Jesus the liberator?

Many a volume has been written for and against this kind of Church growth missiology. Bishop Newbiggin among others, in his book '*The Open Secret*' (1978 Grand-Rapids, Mich.) has thoroughly discussed the issues related and dangers posed by the HUP for evangelising Indian Society. It is hoped that our indigenous missionary societies and other Evangelical Organisations in India will not neglect theological rethinking of their missionary methods. This same goes for the almost 6000 foreign missionaries who have come out along with mainly 'Evangelical' missionary agencies from the West in recent decades. Several of these 'Evangelical Missionaries' are associated with *Radio Evangelism* and other mass Media like *Literature Evangelism*, besides those who help organise *City penetration plans* as *Evangelism-in-Depth*, and 'Crusades' and 'Campaigns' with the language and concepts that openly smack of militarism, colonialism and imperialism to the Indian mind and ears. In his book *Whither Evangelicals?* (1975 — New Delhi) Dr. Ben Wati gives clear exposition of the theology and strategies of Evangelism of the Indian Evangelicals. Among other things he calls for 'a Christian presence in a hostile world'. (Page 5) through what he calls the cell groups. As for the role of the foreign missionaries he approvingly quotes John V. Taylor from his book '*For All the World*' 'In the story of any new Church the missionary contribution progresses; through three phases: Missionaries are first pioneers, then Pastors, and finally partners.'

In the past two or three years, at least three of the 20 Dioceses of the Church of South India, have reported over more than 12 thousand converts receiving baptism mostly from villages. One of the Bishops said that this happened through the witnessing of poor rural Christians to their own kith and kin still in the fold of other faiths. In fact several of the NCCI member churches reported of similar mode of evangelism taking place in their areas. This being so, any over anxiety for numerical growth of the Church with an urge for success-oriented application of management principles for 'winning souls' for our faith will be

counter productive; in the long run. In 1981, the NCCI and the RC Church had a Joint Consultation on Evangelism at Alwaye. Its report 'Our Common Witness' makes very deep analysis of various aspects of mission and evangelism. Among other things a notable point in it is that in view of the Gangetic plain in the North of India having been in all past history the scene of deciding the destiny of India, should not the church in India also concentrate all its missionary efforts in that region? Surely there is much food for thought in that book for the Indian Church as it reflects on its Evangelistic task today.

A final observation by this writer may be permitted. Over 400 years of Missionary enterprise in India had resulted in gathering some 20 million people into the fold of the Church today. But a vast majority, in fact, more than 75% of these are drawn from the so-called scheduled castes shedding their lingering animism and a confused form of village Hinduism and the scheduled tribes shedding their natural and dynamic religions. All sorts of efforts and strategies to win converts from the major, philosophical forms of Hinduism and even Islam or Jainism or Sikhism meet with poor and negligible results over these hundreds of years, even if only in terms of numbers. As for the strategies for only 'influencing' the peoples of major religions with the impact of the Gospel, like 'modification' of the masses (Kenneth Scot Latourette) or 'dynamiting the Hindu fortress through education' (Dr. Miller), even these had met with no significant results, though did succeed in stimulating 'resurgence' and 'renaissance'

amongst them. Recently, the method of 'dialogue with people of other faiths and Ideologies' is being developed. Certainly this process of continuous contact and open relationship with our neighbours of other faiths must be promoted. But such approaches of witnessing to the Gospel of Christ, by their very nature, will be limited in their scope involving only those well-informed of the tenets of these religions and the philosophical moorings of these faiths. Only the elitist, the educated and the sophisticated intellectuals whether from Christian faith or other faiths can engage in any meaningful or creative 'dialogue' between them. But the vast majority of common people in our land with only 36.17% literacy rate, even most of them quite ignorant of their own faith, will have to be enabled to encounter Christ on their own level and contexts, and on their own terms and conditions, if the Indian Church would authentically want to witness to them. After all, like it was in the Christian world of St. Paul, in India too, 'not many among us are wise, not many rich.'

The facts of the situation, therefore, would seem to demand that the Indian Church today must focus its priority attention on those sections of our neighbours who had been more open and fruitful for the Gospel over the past 400 years. These happen to be the so-called scheduled castes (83 million) and scheduled tribes (over 42 million) who together form about 22% of India's population as per 1981 census. 'Was not the priority for Jesus Christ himself' 'to preach the Gospel to the poor' (Luke 4:18)?

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Partnership in Mission in the 1980's

DR. YAP KIM HAO

General Secretary, C.C.A., Singapore

Principle of Partnership

Partnership as a concept has been discussed for decades in missionary circles. In the meetings of the former International Missionary Council statements on partnership were adopted to address the issue of devolution of mission. So in Whitby 1947 the catchword was 'Partners in Obedience.' In recent decades we carry the slogan of 'Partnership in Mission.' We have enunciated partnership as the guiding principle for relationships and structures for mission.

From the beginning we have acknowledged some of the problems when we faced realistically the unequal positions of those who come into the partnership. In the early days of the powerful missionary societies and mission boards of Western Churches the unequal relationships were glaring. Western mission agencies possess funds and personnel from the large churches existing in strong industrialized economies. They had a concern for mission and a passion to save the people in the world. Non-Western churches with limited resources and struggling in weak economies depended heavily on outside assistance. The missionary enterprise was interpreted as part of Western colonial and political expansion and as a feature of Western dominance. With such inequalities of power distribution it was hard to avoid the pattern of domination and dependency. To what degree have we been able to overcome this problem in the different structures for mission today?

There is a built-in-disparity of power and influence even in multilateral structures for mission when the considerations are exclusively on administration of funds and deployment of personnel. There is the problem of separating decisions about money from decisions about people. Those who have money want to link money with people. It is argued that it is necessary to do so in order to maintain the flow of money. The level of participation is controlled by the contributions one makes to the common pool. When the determinative factors are only funds and personnel partnership becomes difficult.

Are there other kinds of contributions? Mature partnership takes into account contributions other than funds and personnel, especially in the mission of the church. What about the gifts of the Spirit to all of God's people? There are other components of Christian experience and spiritual insights which cannot be equated or expressed in terms of dollars and missionaries. The various gifts of the partners have to be brought together in the community. Together in obedience they are to discern the way in which all of God's resources are to be employed for the total mission of the whole Church.

When every individual member senses there is something to offer and something to receive, then partnership becomes real. No one is so rich that nothing is lacking nor so poor that nothing can be given. We need grace to receive.

We need to overcome the feelings both of superiority and inferiority in any structure of mission. To the traditionally powerful the problem is faced in a more difficult way.

To some of my Western Christian friends who are filled with enthusiasm and eagerness to solve some of our Asian problems, I say that we appreciate these offers of help and assistance. But their analysis of our problems should include working in their own political and economic backyards which cause the problems in our societies in the first place. Then I say that it is good for our souls and I guess for theirs too, if there is some way in which we can help to solve some of their problems in the West. No country or region has an exclusive monopoly of problems or solutions.

Are the Western churches ready to seek the help of others to tackle some of their issues other than ministering to the ethnic minorities who have emigrated to their shores? Do they honestly believe that others can help? If the Western partners do not really give a place for those outside to participate in their mission then we are not really talking about genuine partnership. Partnership is learning from one another and bearing one another's burden. How mature is our partnership when some members feel self-satisfied and self-sufficient?

We can say in partnership in mission that one has no right to contribute unless one is prepared to receive. No single situation is so developed that no assistance is required. We are all interdependent upon one another. We need one another to fulfill our peculiar mission.

How then does one define the mission of the church in the country or in the local community? We are increasingly reminded that primary responsibility for the decision of mission in any specific area rests upon God's faithful people in that situation. Decisions arise out of Christian obedience of the people in the local. The faithful ones who are nearest to the situation are best equipped to decide on the merits of it. Of course they need to check their observations with others who stand from an objective distance. The ecumenical fellowship assists in enabling the church to arrive at a responsible decision. But it is still a decision that the local community has to make and live by. They and they alone are more affected by it, and answerable to Christ for the consequences.

Even though I work within a regional ecumenical organization my experience has been that CCA tries to make as few decisions as possible that are applicable for all countries in the region. We also tend to respect the decisions made at the local and national level. This is to take into consideration our own limitations as a regional office to have the necessary information to decide responsibly for the local and the particular even though some are represented in the regional decision-making body. We therefore lean upon the counsel of the local people.

Another area of discussion has been the limitation of the number of partners in the community. Some years ago Jacques Maury in reflecting on the Evangelical Community for Apostolic Action (CEVAA) was faced with the question of the possible expansion in terms of membership. He said, 'Our particularity and our opportunity comes from being of manageable size, a grouping of churches that are relatively small. We have a feeling that, at least for some time we should not enlarge our group too much, or we will lose the chance to live as a real community.'

On the other hand, your former General Secretary Bernard Thorogood discerned the common thread of congregational or reformed tradition in the membership of CWM and hoped to 'develop a structure which can be seen as interim and open to ecumenical developments, a structure which will not have a confessional basis for outreach.'

What is the shape of ecumenical development within CWM? How interim is this undertaking that you envisage?

There is a rational to build a community which shares some common history and mutual trust. Confessional loyalties have to yield to ecumenical commitment. But highly centralized global or regional structures are less effective and desirable than local or national ecumenical structures which are closer to the point of implementation of mission.

There is yet another dimension of partnership which we do not normally consider. We concentrate on our own structures of partnership and ignore the relationship with the people whom we serve. The people and the situations are out there and they become objects of our mission.

To identify with the people — with their hopes and aspirations — is the insistent call. The experience of the Christians in China has revealed how much they need even now to identify with their own people as they strive to build a new China today. When the Christians and the church share in the common struggle of the people, relationships are being built between them and the other religious and non-religious people. The observation is that the Christians in China today are more related than before and know more about their neighbours than was the case in the past when others were seen merely as targets for conversion. One is encouraged as I was when I led the delegation of Asian church leaders to visit China last month, and saw how the Chinese Christian leaders have developed contacts with Buddhist priests, Muslim imams, and party members in Chinese society. A strong mutual respect has emerged.

As evangelical leader, Wang Wei-fang of Nanjing Seminary, commented :

Over the past three decades, the Chinese Christians, including evangelicals, have shared the joys and sorrows, the weals and woes, perplexities and hopes, weaknesses and strength together with other Chinese people. We have found at last that we are living in the midst of the Chinese people, being accepted as compatriots and have a sense of renewed belonging to our own nation. This was how God instituted high priesthood in the old times, as the Letter to the Hebrews teaches us : He had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God.

Partnership calls not only for a relationship of trust within the members of the community, but an identifica-

tion with the people in the community itself. We seek for growth in the fellowship of the Spirit. There is mutual commitment to participate in the common mission. We belong to the one God and the one mission of God in the world.

Mission in the 1980's

It is for the sake of mission that we become partners. How do we define the mission in which we are to engage as a church in the decade ahead? We have passed the missionary era which made the extraordinary claims of saving the world in that generation. We have gone through the development decades which raised the expectation of economic progress. We have carried banners to indicate that mission is development and development is peace. Questions are now being raised about some of the development programmes as we have raised them before about the mission supported institutions of education, health, and community services.

Even now with their institutions and development projects, especially in the developing world, churches are seen to be engaged in mission. Mission is identified with them and such activities are usually funded not from local sources but by foreign agencies. They seem to have advantages over other religious groups, except Islam in recent years, with their foreign financial connections. Is this a real advantage or is it a hindrance to the mission of the church?

Philip Potter has observed that :

In Asia, Africa, Latin America and the island world, the churches which exercised some influence through their foreign supported educational and social institutions, no longer enjoy the privilege of special treatment, and their efforts at attracting development funds to maintain some influence are a delusion. Mission has been associated with a position of power and influence in worldly terms. This is ceasing to be and happily so far the sake of the integrity of the Gospel.

The same sentiments were shared more recently by Bishop K. H. Ting of China when he said :

The Church in China has relinquished all educational and medical institutions and what a liberation that was In a sense the Church has lost power. But the Church has really evangelised better out of powerlessness. Facts have shown that the strength of the gospel of Jesus Christ is manifested with much greater force through the Church's poverty, weakness and vulnerability.

Churches in the developed countries are also losing their power and influence in their societies. In the affluent countries there is the loss of meaning of life. People everywhere are searching for a spirituality which offers meaning in their existence and sustains them in their struggle for survival. They seek for a new vision for a new future and the mission of the Church must come to terms with such human hopes and expectations.

Mission must seek for the renewal of the Church and the transformation of society. Is the Church seen as a spiritual community? Is the Church merely a social club or a service centre? We need to recover the deeply religious and spiritual dimension of life. This is to respond positively to the widespread search for spirituality. In our

efforts to be contemporary and secular we seem to have lost the sense of the eternal and the sacred. In our attempts to be involved with people we seem to have missed the communion with God. In the work of reconciling the world we seem to have failed to reconcile ourselves with God.

Bishop K. H. Ting in describing the mission of the Church made the following comment :

We are humble and feel inspired by Christians in other countries who give themselves to the cause of the people's social and political liberation But, from our situation we have to say that the message we have received from God and have to transmit centres on reconciliation in Jesus Christ between God and man.

Gandhi was reputed to have said, ' If you want to convert India, do not send us a thousand missionaries, send one saint ! ' The world is desperately in need of saints in the 1980's. We need saints who can communicate that they are touched with the divine and who are involved in the ordinary struggles of life.

The spirituality that is to be affirmed is not that which is an escape from the harsh realities of life and isolates us from the suffering in the world. It is the spirituality that sends us into the world to redeem it and to be involved in the agonies of the people. The communion with God

leads us to the knowledge of God's purposes for all of life for Christ indeed is the life of the world.

To quote M. M. Thomas :

Human spirituality, one might say, is the way in which man, in the freedom of his self-transcendence, seeks a structure of ultimate meaning and sacredness within which he can fulfil or realise himself in and through his involvement in the bodily — the material, and the social realities and relations of his life on earth Similarly, the primary concern of the Christian mission is also with man's right choices in the realm of self-transcendence and sacredness — not in any pietistic or individualistic isolation, but in relation to and expressed within the material, social and cultural revolutions of our time.

The mission of the Church in the 1980's is to work for the total liberation of people — spiritual, social economic and political. They are inter-related to one another.

Conclusion

We live in hope and eager expectation waiting for the Lord of history to fulfil His mission. In God's good time God's purposes will be realised and His kingdom will come. The mission of the Church is to be a sign of the presence of the Kingdom in the world today.

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An Evangelical Balance Sheet from Vancouver

(THE following letter appeared with the September issue of 'A Monthly Letter On Evangelism' from CWME/WCC. Commending it, the Rev. Raymond Fung, WCC Secretary for Evangelism describes it as 'an important document, not so much official Assembly as emerging from the Assembly, that I would very much like to share right away', pending his own 'Pronouncement', as he calls it. He goes on 'It is An Open Letter' from Evangelicals at Vancouver. A statement on the Assembly of those who conscientiously identify themselves as evangelicals, I think it has much ecumenical significance.)

An Open Letter

Many evangelicals from all over the world are present at the 6th Assembly of the World Council of Churches as delegates and observers, advisers and visitors, speakers and press representatives. Many are members of churches within the WCC framework. A number gravitated together and frequently shared impressions and matters of common concern during these days. This statement represents our deep desire to bear witness to what we believe God sought to say to us through the Christians we encountered, the words we heard and the official actions taken at Vancouver. We do not claim to speak on behalf of our churches or of all the evangelicals at the Assembly.

Three-fold task reaffirmed

The theme of Vancouver is 'Jesus Christ — the Life of the World'. We are impressed anew with the rich diversity and complexity of the worldwide Christian movement. We found the exploration of this theme at stimulating experience, especially because the Assembly sought to call Christians everywhere to be more faithful to their threefold task — the pastoral, the prophetic and the apostolic. As a result, its ongoing concern is that the churches be spiritually renewed (the pastoral), that they become socially responsible (the prophetic) and that they display diligence in their holistic witness to the Gospel (the apostolic).

Spiritual and Biblical Orientation

As we pressed deeper into days crowded with presentations, reflection and inter-action, it became apparent that Vancouver 1983 marks significant progress over the last two Assemblies (Uppsala 1968 and Nairobi 1975) in its overarching spiritual and biblical orientation. This was apparent in the following ways:

1. The dimension of worship was both central and spiritually refreshing. At plenary sessions and in the daily worship services, we enjoyed warm communal fellowship as we reached out to God in prayer and praise.
2. The wider space given to Bible exposition and the affirmation of basic biblical themes in plenary sessions represented unmistakable loyalty to the historic rootage of our Christian faith.
3. Biblical messages on the nature and mission of the church under such key themes as Jesus Christ, life and the world, prepared the way for earnest effort

to relate these truths to the problems facing Christians today.

4. The Orthodox, with their trinitarianism their spirituality, and their participation in group discussions at all levels, reminded us of some of the church's non-negotiable treasures, while other segments of the worldwide church called us to face the urgencies of today.
5. We entered into deeper anguish over the terrible injustices currently perpetrated against the poor, the powerless and the oppressed throughout the world. We perceived anew that the issues of nuclear disarmament and peace could become a pre-occupation and divert attention from the equally urgent issues of deprivation, injustice, human rights and liberation.
6. We found ourselves standing with the many who refused to believe that the powers of oppression, death and destruction will have the last word on human existence.
7. Finally, and most important of all, representatives from all segments of the church called the Assembly to accept the reality that Jesus Christ is indeed the life of the world. Women spoke alongside men. The youth and the disadvantaged were heard. Even the children. And the ordained clergy made no attempt to dominate the ministry of the Word of God.

Special Concerns

Ever since the WCC was formed in 1948 at Amsterdam, each successive Assembly has been unique. Vancouver was no exception. In its study papers, group discussions and personal conversations, we could readily discern several concerns:

1. That Christians must rigorously eschew any docetic understanding of the Gospel. The church can only be renewed today if it faces courageously the relation of Jesus Christ to the totality of human need and experience. We see onesideness in a pre-occupation with 'contending for the faith' while ignoring a world going up in flames.
2. That as the Church presses deeper into the '80's, all agreed that Christians shall increasingly be drawn in their biblical reflection and theologizing to focus on the flight of the poor — those whom Christ particularly singled out as the ones to hear the good news of the Kingdom (Luke 4:18, 19).

3. That increasingly, the church is being reinforced in its perception of the demonic dimensions of structural evil. They are as offensive to God and as destructive to people as any personal evil. One WCC official spoke for many when he related the poor to 'the church's most important missiological issue—the centrality of Jesus Christ'. Christ alone is the life of the world and he alone can deal with the problem of evil. But he must be proclaimed to all peoples. And the majority of those who have not heard the Gospel are the poor.
4. That the dominant issue before the Church today is the interrelation of its concerns for justice and peace. They cannot be separated. We noted that this issue has both vertical and horizontal implications. Moreover, the biblical vision of justice with peace through Jesus Christ, the life of the world, was not posed as one of several options for those who could follow him, but as the only option.

Some reservations

As evangelicals we rejoiced that the Assembly did not simply confine itself to the prophetic task of the church. The nurture of Christians and their witness to the unbelieving world were also included. But we would not be true to our evangelical convictions were we merely to endorse the positive affirmations made at Vancouver. We were troubled by occasional statements which implied that apart from Jesus Christ the world can have life. Not every address reflected high Christological and soteriological perspectives . . . True, none of us wants to judge the Assembly by the input of some of the speakers. Nevertheless, at the end of the second week of deliberations we would like to make the following observations :

1. Although the WCC Central Committee had approved (1982) an illuminating and thoroughly evangelical study : Mission and Evangelism, we were disappointed that it was not referred to in any plenary address. We were gratified that the Affirmation received strong support in the programme Guideliness Committee Report, in other reports and in the Assembly's Message to the Churches. No ecumenical document has been so welcomed by evangelicals. Actually, evangelical counsel was widely sought in its preparation. Furthermore the Assembly did not give central place to the shameful fact that at this late hour in the history of the church, more than three billion have yet to hear the Gospel of Christ — despite Christ's mandate that it be proclaimed to all peoples. We did not feel that the Assembly adequately treated either Gospel proclamation or the invitational dimensions of evangelism. On occasion terminology became fuzzy and theology worse. For example, while the Assembly frequently heard that sin brings social alienation, little was said about spiritual alienation — from God himself. As a result, the redemptive dimension of Christ's sufferings on the Cross was not particularly stressed. Moreover, while larger issues of social ethics were frequently treated, more personal ethical concerns rarely surfaced. In sum there were times when we wished that evangelical voices in the churches were given the prominence accorded some theological mavericks. Fortunately,

in the issue and discussion groups, we heard evangelical men and women participate whose evident concern was to remind fellow delegates of the biblical authority and witness to the issues under review. Evangelicals are convinced that if Jesus Christ is the life of the world, his claim that his words are spirit and life (John 6 : 63) should not be downplayed.

What Evangelicals might learn

All of which brings us to raise the crucial question : What should be the evangelical response to the many signs of growth and renewal we discerned in the Assembly ? Should evangelicals seek more direct involvement in the ecumenical process ?

At Vancouver, some evangelicals were adamant in their stand against any participation in the WCC. We were saddened to come upon a few zealous Christians distributing scurrilous anti-WCC literature. We deplored their tactics and hung our heads in shame over their sweeping denunciations. Their actions, in our judgement constituted false witness against their neighbours.

At the same time, should evangelicals see significance in the growing effectiveness of the Orthodox contribution to the WCC alongside the growing WCC challenge to the Orthodox to extend their mission into the world ? Is there not the possibility that evangelicals have not only much to contribute but something to revive through ecumenical involvement ?

Do evangelicals not also have the obligation, along with other Christians to seek to overcome the scandal of the disunity and disobedience of the churches that the world might believe (John 17 : 21) ? Should evangelicals not seek to receive all who confess Jesus Christ as Lord, even though they may seriously disagree on theological issues apart from the core of the Gospel ? There is no biblical mandate to withdraw from those who have not withdrawn from Christ. Should not Christians gladly receive all those whom God has manifestly received ? Are not the alternatives — rejection or indifference — totally incompatible with the Apostle Paul's affirmation that Christ is not divided (I Corinthians 1 : 13) ?

Our experience at Vancouver challenged stereotypes some of us have had of the WCC. And our involvement in WCC processes and programmes made us realize anew the distortions in the popular evangelical understanding of them. Hence, we feel pressed to declare publicly our determination to be more actively involved in all efforts seeking, the unity and renewal of the church. Because we have seen evidence of God at work here, we cannot but share our growing conviction that evangelicals should question biblically the easy acceptance of withdrawal, fragmentation and parochial isolation that tends to characterize many of us. Should we not be more truthful of these who profess Christ's Lordship ? Should we not be more concerned with the peace, purity and unity of the people of God thereby grants the church renewal for which many pray, shall this not forever demolish that all too popular evangelical heresy — that the way to renew the body of Christ is to separate from it and relentlessly criticize it ?

— CCA.



World Council of Churches General Secretary's Report

DR. PHILIP POTTER, Geneva

May I once again greet you warmly at this Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver. This is the second time in the thirty-five years of its existence that the Council's Assembly has met in North America. The last time was the Second Assembly at Evanston, Illinois in the USA, in 1954, with the theme, 'Jesus Christ the Hope of the World'. We gathered together then in a period of fear and despair in the midst of the confrontation between the East and West, and the struggles of peoples for political, economic and racial justice around the world. The witch hunt of McCarthyism was raging in the USA, and its effects were felt in the Assembly. And yet, we were able to say together in the Message :

Here where we stand (under the judgment of God and in the shadow of death), Jesus stood with us. He came to us, true God and true Man, to seek and to save. Though we were the enemies of God, Christ died for us. We crucified him, but God raised him from the dead. He is risen. He has overcome the powers of sin and death. A new life has begun. And in his risen and ascended power, he has sent forth into the world a new community, bound together by his Spirit, sharing his divine life, and commissioned to make him known throughout the world.

(*Evanston Report*, p. 1)

These words are still appropriate as we meet nearly thirty years later under the theme : 'Jesus Christ — the Life of the World'. We come to Vancouver as those who share the divine life in Christ and desire to offer it in all its fullness to the peoples of the world. In contrast to the Evanston Assembly, we meet this time as a much more representative gathering of people from all over the world than in Evanston. We meet, too, under a much darker cloud of fear and despair than in 1954. The confrontation between East and West and between North and South, as well as the conflicts within countries between classes, races, classes and religions, have become much sharper and more complex. The very survival of the human race is daily threatened.

At the Fifth Assembly in Nairobi in 1975, there was a feeling of being in the wilderness, as the children of Israel were after the Exodus, full of doubts and fears. Nevertheless, despite the pain and conflicts we experienced during that meeting, there was no retreat from the positions we had taken and the programmes we had launched after the Fourth Assembly at Uppsala in 1968. Indeed, we engaged ourselves to go forward and undertake more specific, even controversial programmes in obedience to our calling. When we examine the official report, 'Nairobi to Vancouver', which the Moderator has already generously and perceptively introduced, we can see that in the wilderness of our time we have been able to receive and proclaim God's word of life; we have had contact with a wider variety of people and more churches have been visited than ever before; we have laboured for the unity of the church and for the renewal of humankind; we have tried

to meet human need in every part of the globe, and to be in solidarity with the oppressed and the deprived; we have spoken and acted in situations of conflict.

There is a profound sense in which the Church is by its very nature always in the wilderness on its pilgrim way to the City of God, or as the Letter to the Hebrews put it, to the world (*oikoumene*) to come (2 : 5). The Church is the people of God created and consecrated through the Exodus in the death and resurrection of Christ. It is called to participate in the sufferings of Christ for the salvation of our broken, divided world. At the beginning of the Church's history it was seen as a community of people scattered all over the Roman Empire, having no legal or social status, and subject to harassment, persecution and death.

It was to such diaspora churches that the First Letter of Peter was addressed. We have been using a passage from that letter for one of the 'Images of Life' in our Bible studies as a preparation for this Assembly (1 Peter 2 : 4-10). It is called 'The House made of Living Stones', and is intended to be an image of the Church. I would like us to meditate for a while on what it means to be the Church as 'the house of living stones' in a hostile world which still yearns to be a house of living stones, a living community of sharing in justice and peace. This biblical meditation will, I hope, help us to reflect on what we have learned during these thirty-five years of the existence of the World Council of Churches about the nature and calling of the churches and also about the Council itself as a fellowship of churches.

Peter exhorts the diaspora churches :

Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by people, but in God's sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

(1Peter 2 : 4-5)

Christ is God's delegated and precious living stone. As the Psalmist declared, 'the stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone' (118 : 22), so Christ rejected and crucified, is now the risen, life-giving Lord. That is the foundation of our faith, and the basis of the World Council of Churches.

Actually, according to the Gospels, it was Jesus himself who drew attention to this Psalm, which was the last of a group of Psalms called 'Hallel' (Praise) sung during and after the great feasts at Jerusalem (Ps. 111-118). Ps. 118 was sung after the Passover—the meal which served as the binding force of the people of Israel on the eve of the Exodus. Jesus quoted this verse of Ps. 118 in his controversy with the religious authorities who plotted his death (Mark 12 : 1-12), on the eve of what Luke called his exodus (Luke 9 : 31). He spoke to his disciples of being rejected

and killed and rising again after three days (Mark 8 : 31). In recalling his experience with Jesus and what he learned from it, Peter is saying to the diaspora churches in Asia Minor, as he says to us today, that confessing Christ means entering into his sufferings and sharing his risen life. He invites them and us to keep on coming day after day to Christ the living stone, so that we may ourselves become living stones, share his life and continue his ministry of suffering for humankind in joyful hope.

But becoming living stones means that believers do not remain isolated, alone, petrified, dead. Rather they are made alive and are being built into a house (*oikos*) which is enlivened by the Spirit. Christ is the cornerstone, and the Spirit enables those who come to Christ to be built (*oikodomein*) into this house.

Now the word 'house' had rich meanings in the thought of the peoples of the Middle East. It signified, among other things, community, nation, culture, way of life, structure, environment. Abraham was called by God out of his father's house, *bayith*, *oikos* (Genesis 12 : 2), that is, out of his nation and culture, to form a new house, *oikos*, through the covenant, a house based on his faith in and obedience to God (Gen. 15 : 6 ; 17 : 12-13). This new house, this new people of God found themselves swallowed up into 'the house of bondage' in Egypt. They were delivered from Pharaoh (a word which comes from the Egyptian *Per-aa*, the Great House) through the Exodus and made 'the house of Israel'. This house was given a way of life which was based on their deliverance from Egypt and directed by the liberating word of the Covenant (Exodus 19-23). As a means of keeping the house of Israel fully and continuously conscious of the nature of their existence and task there was established the house of God, the place of worship, the temple, where people offered their life and their labour to God and received his renewing grace.

The drama of Israel was that again and again they lost their loyalty to the founder of the house and accommodated themselves to the ethical and spiritual attitudes of the surrounding houses or cultures, *oikoi*. They also failed to live as a household according to the covenant, sharing a common life in truth, justice and peace, as the prophets again and again challenged them. For example, Jeremiah wrote :

Do not trust in these deceiving words : 'This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord'. For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly execute justice one with another, if you do not oppress the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, then I will let you dwell in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your fathers for ever... Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, says the Lord (Jer. 7 : 4-7,11).

What Jeremiah is saying is that the people of God, the house of Israel, are constituted on certain qualities and obligations—justice and mercy, and utter loyalty to God the Lord of the house. They are based on the Torah, the Law, the words of the Covenant. A house is truly built on those qualities which enable its inhabitants to live together in community and in common well-being (*shalom*, peace). Where these qualities are lacking the house cannot stand. Institutions and structures, *oikoi*, acquire their demonic character when people have lost that strength of being, that clear integrity and sense of purpose which

enable them to discern, correct and change their situation. There comes a time, therefore, when those structures have to be destroyed in order that new structures, a new house *oikos*, can be built up on a new basis or covenant, enabling people to be responsible for themselves and for one another before God (Jer. 31 : 27-34). This is what Jesus did in himself when he said the old temple would be destroyed in his crucifixion and in three days he would build it up through his resurrection (John 2 : 19-21).

Peter affirms that in the crucified and risen Christ, this new house has been built, and all who come to him are living stones forming an integral part of the house, sharing a common life and offering their whole life and that of all to God in the Spirit and through Jesus Christ. Peter goes on to adopt in a new way some of the other old images used of the house of Israel when he speaks of believers being 'a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people' (I Peter 2 : 9a). He means by these terms that believers, as living stones, overcome the separations of racism and are in process of becoming the true human race made in the image of God; that all both women and men, who believe are the priests of the King and Ruler of their lives, offering themselves and the world to God through their worship and their witness; that nationalism, with all its excluding attitudes, gives place to a community which is consecrated to God and his purpose to unite all nations in their diversity into one house, *oikos*; and that all are the people of God as a sign of God's plan (*oikonomia*—the management of the house) to unite all peoples into one human family in justice and peace. It is this house which is called to proclaim the wonderful deeds of God who called them out of darkness into his marvellous light (I Peter 2 : 9). This is Peter's way of expressing what the Niceno-Constantinople Creed calls us to confess : 'I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.'

It is this image and understanding of the living house (*oikos*) which has motivated the ecumenical movement. As is well known, 'ecumenical' is derived from the Greek word *oikoumene*, the whole inhabited earth. It is a word which came into common use when Alexander the Great was conquering the world of the Middle East. The intention was that people should give up their cultural isolation and participate in a cosmopolitan life through which they would discover their true humanity. That was the *oikoumene*. When the Romans conquered the Hellenists, their rulers were hailed as lords and saviours of the *oikoumene*.

It is against this background that we can understand how this word was appropriated when the Old Testament was translated into Greek and the New Testament was written. In Psalm 24 : 1 we read:- 'The earth is the Lord' and its fulness; the world (*oikoumene*) and those who dwell in it.' Not Caesar, but Yahweh, the one who has been and is present in the world, is the Lord and Saviour of the *oikoumene*, ruling it in truth, justice and peace, and manifesting his purpose through the covenant people, the house of Israel. His purpose is that the whole *oikoumene* will recognise him as the true Lord and Saviour. It is through him that true humanity becomes a promise and a reality. In the New Testament we are told, for example of the preaching of Paul at Thessalonica and the forming of a house church. There is an uproar against the Christians and some are accused before the city authorities : 'These people who have turned the world (*oikoumene*) upside down have come here also... and they are acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king Jesus' (Acts 17 : 6-7).

The ecumenical movement is, therefore, the means by which the churches which form the house, *oikos*, of God are seeking so to live and witness before all peoples that the transformation of the whole *oikoumene* becoming the *oikos* of God through the crucified and risen Christ and in the power of the life-giving Spirit may become a reality. The World Council of Churches was formed in 1948 precisely to be a means of enabling this process to take place in the totality of the life and witness of the churches in response to the totality of God's claim on the life of the *oikoumene*. What then have we learned during these thirty-five years of the ecumenical journey of the nature and calling of the churches which have engaged themselves as a fellowship (*koinonia*), another expression for what Peter calls the house (*oikos*) made up of the churches scattered around the world which have together formed the World Council of Churches?

First, we have been learning to be a fellowship of confessing. In fact, the basis of the World Council is that is 'a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling in the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit'.

The churches have been drawn together after centuries of separation in a fellowship of confessing communities which live 'according to the Scriptures'. It is through the biblical renewal of the past fifty years or so that the churches themselves have been heeding the words of Peter: 'The time has come for judgment to begin with the house (*oikos*) of God' (I Peter 4:17). That was the revolutionary discovery of Martin Luther, the 500th anniversary of whose birth we celebrate this year. He brought back the centre of the life of the Church the sovereignty of God's judging and redeeming word, that it may be reformed and constantly be reformed in order to become a true use of living stones.

Through the World Council the churches have been constrained to share with one another the ways in which they confess their faith and have, through mutual correction, from time to time become conscious of their own failure to live up to the claims of the Gospel. The ecumenical movement is first of all a call to the churches to penitence (*metanoia*), a change of heart and mind in the direction of the offer and demand of Christ, the living stone, and greater openness to confess together their faith boldly and joyfully in the storm of the World's life.

I want to give one illustration of the ways we have advanced as a fellowship of confessing. When the Orthodox churches and the churches of the Reformation got together to form the World Council, there was great diffidence between them. Apart from the fact that they did not accept each other as churches in the full sense, there was also a history of proselytism—churches confessing their faith in a commanding way and seeking to win converts from other churches. At the Third Assembly at New Delhi, 1961, when the International Missionary Council was integrated into the World Council, there was an agreed statement on Christian Witness, Proselytism and Religious Liberty. The churches were called upon to disavow all forms of proselytism so as to render their common witness for Christ more faithful and more convincing. In the same year, the Second Vatican Council produced a Decree on Religious Liberty in 1965. Then in 1970 the Joint Working Group of the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches issued a study document on 'Christian witness and Proselytism' where the emphasis was very much on common witness. By 1980, the same Joint Working Group agreed to have published a statement

on 'Common Witness', giving many stories of ways in which Christian communities have been confessing their faith together in word and action. The churches have thus been enabled, through the World Council, to clear away many obstacles to their common witness, whether as churches, base communities, or action groups. This amazing fact has too often been taken for granted.

Moreover, we have been learning the meaning of the words of Peter in his letter: 'In your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with modesty and reverence' (3:15). I do not here refer to the notable theological reflections carried out on 'Giving an account of the Hope that is in us', but rather to the way in which the churches have been encouraged to carry out a dialogue with people of living faiths and ideologies and with those without faith. The nature of dialogue is as Peter presents it. Even as we reverence Christ, so must we reverence those with whom we have dialogue. In a profound sense Christ is present besides the other putting his claim upon us. Therefore, we must be ready to listen to the other to receive a word of judgement and promise, with the Scriptures as our criterion, and be open to be renewed in faith as we pray that God's Spirit will do his own work with the other. In this spirit, the churches and Christians are being renewed to be confessing communities, and so facilitate the building of 'the house of living stones'.

Secondly, we have gained a fresh understanding of the churches as a fellowship of learning. Of course, this has been a characteristic of the church from the very beginning. Peter uses a very moving image to describe what happens to those who are baptized—who, as in the early church on the eve of Easter, put off their clothes and descend into the waters of baptism and are crucified with Christ and rise from the waters in the risen Christ and put on new clothes. Precisely before he speaks of the image of the house of living stones, Peter writes:

Put off all malice and deceit, and insincerity and jealousy and recrimination of every kind. Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation; for you have tasted that the Lord is good (2:1-3).

The Christian is like a newly born baby who eagerly sucks at its mother's warm breast to receive the food which will enable it to grow and be a person in its own right. Learning is that intimate process of tasting the goodness of God, what he has done and wills to be done that the world may become truly a home (*oikos*). Peter in fact quotes Psalm 34 which describes how we learn the goodness of God in the travail of our existence with others in the world.

Learning in the Bible is a process by which people relate to God and his way of truth, righteousness, and peace, that they may in obedience practise that way in relation to each other and extending to the nations. Moses declares:

The Lord said to me: 'Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn (*lamadh*) to reverence me all the days that they live upon the earth and that they may teach their children.' . . . And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and ordinances, that you might do them in the land which you are going over to possess (Deuteronomy 4:10,14).

(To be Continued)

NEWS from the DIOCESES

NORTH KARNATAKA DIOCESE

The North Karnataka Diocese hosted the Synod Executive Committee at Dharwad on the 16th and 17th of September.

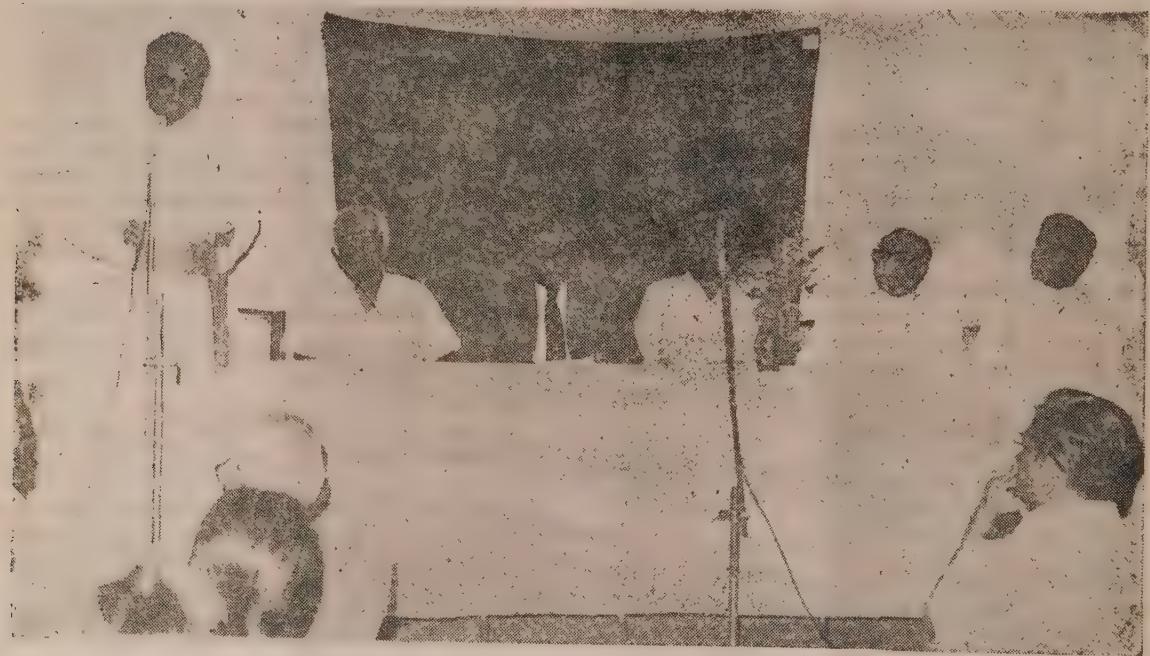
The Synod's Executive Committee :

Apart from the scheduled business which was handled with a superb clarity wherein all the members took active part, contributing to the fullness of the meeting, it was a joyful occasion for the members to come together and spend a couple of days, enjoying the fellowship and sharing the varied experience they have gained in the recent months.

Ably assisted by his colleagues both the clergy and laity and his wife who is known for her hospitality, Bishop Dandin spared no efforts to make the members feel at home. His agelic son Vijji was always there to help the members.

A public reception was given to all the participants with the City Mayor and the Commissioner. Perhaps with an idea of spreading the fragrance of sandal wood to all the dioceses, the Diocese presented sandal wood articles to all the Bishops.

The music and the visuals displayed by the communications Dept. was an added attraction.



Bishop Dandin (North Karnataka) is seen Welcoming the Chairman, the City Mayor, the Chief-guest, the Commissioner at the Public reception accorded by the Diocese during the synod's Executive Meeting. The Moderator, the General Secretary and the Hon. Treasurer are also seen.

KARIMNAGAR DIOCESE

Karimnagar Diocese celebrated the C.S.I. Day with gratitude, remembering the stalwarts who rendered yeomen services to make the union a reality. Bishop G. B. Devasaham, Bishop B. Prabhudas, and Rev. B. D. Vijayarao conducted well-attended services followed by a fellowship dinner arranged by the Cathedral Pastorate Committee.

The fund raising campaign which was initiated in the diocese for the evangelistic work on Sept. 27, '82 has brought about Rs. 1200 so far. Contributions are also being received for the construction of Cathedral at Karimnagar. 4 per cent of the income of his members, a pattern evolved to raise the funds seems to have been encouraging.

NEWS from All Over . . .

JESUS CHRIST : The Life of the World

Vancouver Assembly echo meeting at the Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary on 5th September 1983

The Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary organised the meeting for the Seminary Community and people of Madurai city. Church of South India, Lutheran and Catholic Church leaders and people participated in this meeting.

Rt. Rev. Dr. David Pothirajulu, the Bishop of Madurai-Ramnad Diocese, presided over the meeting.

Rev. Dr. Gnana Robinson, the Principal of the Seminary, shared his experiences of the Sixth Assembly, with an introduction of Vancouver city in Canada using beautiful colour slides. He explained the central place of the worship tent and the worship pattern which very much went along with the programmes of the assembly, and highlighted all the important events of the assembly.

Rev. Dr. Samuel Amirtham, Director of programme of Theological Education of the World Council of Churches and the first Principal of the Seminary, spoke on the significance of the assembly. To him it was an assembly of rich experiences rather than intellectual discourses and discussions. He explained important issues like the integration of politics and worship, participation of women in decision-making, trying to learn from our children, the separable nature of justice and peace, and the need to fight against any force which foster death and support one which foster life. This is the only way to give expres-

sion to our understanding of Jesus Christ as life of the world.

The Rev. Fr. Thamburaj, the Secretary for Ecumenical affairs of the Madurai Arch Diocese of the Catholic Church, expressed in his response that such meetings as this one are the miracles of these days.

He wanted solid proposals to be made for local ecumenism and announced a clergy fellowship of the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches in Madurai, as a first step, which may involve in prayer fellowship.

Rev. Fr. T. A. Soosai, the Vicar General of the Diocese, also participated in the meeting.

Rt. Rev. Dorairaj Peter, the Bishop of the Arcot Lutheran Church and the Chairman of the Seminary Governing Council went a step ahead and remarked, that we shall not stop with fellowships and prayers but proceed towards joint programmes and actions.

There was a discussion session with questions from the participants. Dr. Gnana Robinson and Dr. Samuel Amirtham answered the questions. Towards the end of the meeting the Principal of the Seminary announced that the seminary will assign a staff member to Co-ordinate the local ecumenical affairs, and the Bishop of Madurai-Ramnad diocese informed that his diocese will also appoint one.

REJI CHANDRA

*The Tamil Nadu Theological
Seminary*

Notices

WANTED

WANTED for Kannada/Telugu Development Project—
Skills Development Leader (see September *Churchman*).
The closing date is extended till December 1st and the
lary increased by Rs. 50/-. Contact Project Leader,
ACRDP, CSI Nava Jeevana Kendra, KAVUTA-
AM-518 344, Adoni Taluk, Kurnool Dt. (A.P.)

WANTED

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REACH THE SCHOOL BEFORE THE END OF
NOVEMBER.

BOOK REVIEW

COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA EVANGELISATION

Electronic Christianity : Myth or Ministry

My first reaction on seeing this book went something like this, Oh dear, yet another publication on the electronic church. To my delight, my preconceptions were quickly shattered. This is most certainly not just another book. Once I started reading, it was difficult to put down.

Don Oberdorfer holds a Master of Theology degree from Union Seminary, and a doctorate in communication from the Chicago Theological Seminary. He spent 10 years in parish ministry ; has produced his own television series for the Lutheran church, and is currently Director, Media Services Centre, American Luther Church. In this rather slim but very powerful book, he had combined his own experiences as pastor, television producer and media man in a way which is both interesting, and useful.

Although the book is ostensibly about the electronic church, it encompasses far more than the title suggests. Let me try to highlight some of the areas that are tackled and which are outlined in an introductory chapter. The main themes include : a historical perspective on mass media ; media the series and models ; an analysis of styles of broadcasting ; theological concepts ; future technological developments. He explains clearly that the book is based on the situation in the United States. However, so much of what he has to say is applicable in a variety of situations and has implications for communicators worldwide.

Chapter 2 surveys the rise and development of religious broadcasting. What is fascinating here is the way the author traces our present structures, concerns and entrenched positions from a historical look at the early days of radio. So many of our own concerns were fixed by odd happenings, accidents, or chance occurrences when individual churches or preachers decided to either use or ignore radio. The first congregation to broadcast its services was the Omaha Gospel Tabernacle. Virtually all of the early efforts focused on worship formats. Broadcasting the Good news to convert the unbeliever was the prime, if not the only concern. These two themes continue into the present day.

This chapter is required reading for every person who sets out to use media as a form of Christian expression. We are still shackled by those odd incidents which happened

in the 1920's or 1930's in radio, or about 30 years later television, and which set patterns for our present perspectives.

The third chapter surveys past and present theories media. This is a very useful and informative attempt even if there are one or two places where those unfamiliar with some of the concepts may find it hard to follow. Don Oberdorfer insists that we must set Christian communication within the wider context of general theories of communication. In this, he does a very worthwhile service.

In Chapter 4 he sets out some of the ideas involved linking communication theories with theological insights. Both here, and later, he insists that the media are much better suited to Christian education than to preaching sermon. In case it is not obvious from what I have said so far, this is an intensely practical book. What is valuable is the way that theory, theology, and practice matters are so ably linked together.

In succeeding sections he goes on to discuss models that can be used for Christian communicators, with emphasis on those systems that involve a real dialogue, rather than one-way monologue. There is advice on how to unify in the media ; an analysis of styles of religious broadcasting ; strong condemnation of authoritarian sermonising approaches to electronic ministry.

This is not always a comfortable book. He spells out clearly the danger inherent in the use of media as a one-way circuit for pouring out propaganda. He shows that often churches are not against one another in their desire for increased ratings, filled coffers, or prestige. He claims that often we completely misunderstand the effectiveness of television as an entertainment, rather than an educational, medium, such misunderstandings drastically reduce our effectiveness as Christian communicators.

In this short, clear, well set out book, Don Oberdorfer has provided essential reading for anyone who is at interested in understanding, knowing, or using electronic means of communication within a Christian context. If you buy only one book on media and the ministry, make sure it is this one.

RONALD BROWN
— WAC

ATTENTION READERS

In view of the increase in postal tariff and high cost of printing, it was resolved in the Synod Working Committee of July 2, 1983 to increase the annual subscription of *South India Churchman* from January, 1984 as follows :

Subscription in India .. Rs. 12.00
Single Copy .. Rs. 1.50

Overseas Subscriptions :

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[NOVEMBER 1983]

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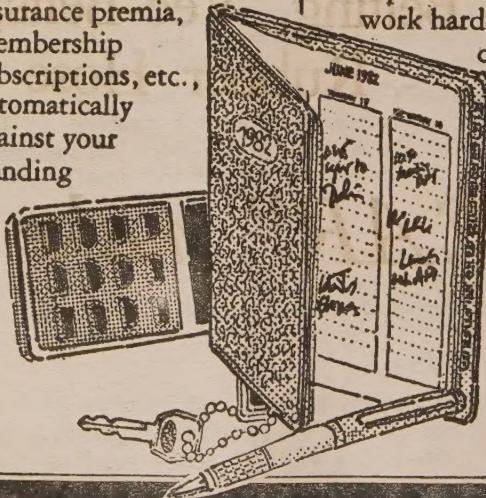
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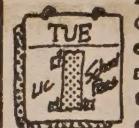
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